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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Noise Element of a General Plan provides a basis for comprehensive local programs to control and abate environmental noise and to limit community exposure to excessive noise levels. State law (Government Code § 65302 (f)) requires a Noise Element to "... analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, ... current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:

- 1) Highways and freeways;
- 2) Primary arterials and major local streets;
- 3) Passenger and freight on-line railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems;
- 4) Commercial, general aviation, heliport ... and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation;
- 5) Local industrial plants; and
- 6) Other ground stationary noise sources identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment."

Noise contours must be shown for each of these sources and used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land use in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. A description of the County's noise environment, including noise contours, is included in the **Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)**.

State law also requires the noise element to include implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems. The adopted noise element also serves as a guideline for compliance with the state's insulation standards. These standards specify required levels of outdoor to indoor noise reduction for new multi-family residential construction in areas where the outdoor noise exposure exceeds CNEL (or Ldn) 60 dB.

The fundamental goals of a noise element are:

- To provide sufficient information concerning the community noise environment so that noise may be considered effectively in the land use planning process.
- To develop strategies for abating excessive noise exposure through cost-effective mitigation measures in combination with zoning, as appropriate, to avoid incompatible land use.
- To protect those existing regions of the planning area whose noise environments are deemed acceptable and also those locations throughout the community deemed "noise sensitive".
- To utilize the definition of the community noise environment, in the form of CNEL or Ldn noise contours as provided in the Noise Element, for local compliance with the State Noise Insulation Standards.

## **II. ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS**

- 1.** Mono County's quiet, rural atmosphere is important in attracting tourists and residents to the area. There is a need to protect the County's existing noise environment by establishing standards for maximum desired noise levels and by outlining methods of reducing and mitigating the effects of land uses which produce excessive amounts of noise.
- 2.** There is a need to identify future potential major noise sources, such as mining or additional geothermal development, and to establish standards for maximum desired noise levels for those sources and methods of reducing and mitigating noise from those sources.
- 3.** There is a need to adopt methods for measuring noise, especially when the source is located outside of community areas and topographic features may either accentuate or mitigate noise impacts from the source.
- 4.** There is a need to identify land uses sensitive to noise, such as hospitals, schools, residential areas, wilderness areas and other natural areas, ***certain recreational areas, popular visitor destinations and cultural resource sites***, and to develop policies to protect those areas from the adverse impacts of excessive noise.
- 5.** There is a need to measure noise around helipads and military airports in the County and to establish policies to regulate noise at those sites.
- 6.** There is a need to identify and define noise incompatible land uses and to correlate the policies in the Noise Element with those in the Land Use Element in order to avoid land use designations which allow for incompatible adjacent land uses.
- 7.** There is a need to update the County's Noise Ordinance (Chapter 10.16 of the County Code), including the noise standards in that ordinance, in order to address the issues identified above.

### III. POLICIES

#### GOAL

Maintain existing ambient noise levels<sup>1</sup> to preserve the County's quiet, rural atmosphere.

#### OBJECTIVE A

Minimize the impacts of existing noise generating activities.

Policy 1: Regulate noise generating activities.

Action 1.1: Continue to enforce, and revise as necessary, Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code, which establishes noise standards and regulates noise according to those standards.

Action 1.2: Continue to enforce existing planning and energy permit conditions which regulate the permitted hours for certain noise generating operations.

Action 1.3: Encourage the California Highway Patrol and the Sheriff's Department to actively enforce the provisions of the California Motor Vehicle Code and the Harbors and Navigation Code pertaining to vehicle noise emissions, including provisions addressing excessive noise generated by powerboats and off-road vehicles (O.R.V.'s).

Action 1.4: Work with the Walker River Irrigation District Task Force to develop guidelines in their recreation plans for Topaz and Bridgeport reservoirs to control noise from powerboats.

Action 1.5: Continue to implement noise-related policies in local Airport Land Use Plans.

Policy 2: Confine the noise impacts from transportation facilities to the smallest feasible land areas and assure that development within or adjacent to those areas is compatible with the level of noise exposure.

Action 2.1: Work with Caltrans and the Local Transportation Commission (LTC) to design and manage transportation systems to produce the lowest feasible noise levels and impacts on noise sensitive land uses.

Action 2.2: Work with Caltrans and the LTC to consider measures to reduce peak traffic volumes as a means to reduce highway related noise.

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<sup>1</sup>**Ambient Noise Level** --The background noise level at a given location. The ambient noise level constitutes the normal or existing level of environmental noise at a given location and is a composite of sounds from many sources. Isolated, identifiable noise sources, such as airplanes and heavy trucks, are not taken into account, nor is noise produced by an item or items of equipment at the location and approximate time at which a comparison with the equipment noise is to be made.

Action 2.3: Work with Caltrans and the Department of Public Works to select route alignments for new roadways and major improvements to existing highways to avoid or minimize noise impacts on noise sensitive land uses.

Action 2.4: Work with the U.S. Marine Corps to reduce the noise impacts from helicopter flights and other military aircraft, particularly over the Antelope Valley. ***Work with the military to reduce the impact of low flying aircraft over significant public use areas, such as Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park.***

Policy 3: County equipment and vehicles shall comply with adopted noise level performance standards consistent with the best available noise reduction technology.

Policy 4: Review and update the Noise Element and Noise Ordinance (Chapter 10.16 of the County Code), as necessary, to ensure that noise information and policies are consistent with current conditions.

Action 4.1: Continue to assess the frequency and severity of noise complaints.

Action 4.2: Update existing and projected noise contour data as required by State law.

Action 4.3: Develop noise contour data for helipads in the county (e.g. Forest Service, USMC, hospitals).

## **OBJECTIVE B**

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Minimize the impacts of new noise sources on the noise environment.

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Policy 1: Future development projects shall avoid potential significant noise impacts or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.

Action 1.1: Future development projects with the potential to substantially increase the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas or involving a noise sensitive land use in a noise impacted area shall provide an acoustical analysis prior to project approval. The analysis shall:

- a) be funded by the applicant;
- b) be prepared by a qualified acoustical consultant under the direction of Mono County;
- c) assess the noise environment in the general project vicinity;
- d) describe the noise generation potential of the proposed project within the project site and on surrounding areas and compare the noise generation potential of the project to the adopted standards in Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code;
- e) recommend noise control measures to avoid or mitigate noise impacts and to assure compliance with Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code; and

- f) include estimates of noise levels after these measures have been implemented.

Noise control measures shall be included in the project plans and specifications and shall be made a condition of approval for the project.

Action 1.2: Require noise monitoring and regular reporting as a part of the environmental monitoring and compliance program, as necessary, for new development projects.

Action 1.3: Amend Chapter 10.16 of the County Code to include performance standards for mitigation of noise impacts, including measures such as buffering and site planning techniques.

Policy 2: The total noise level resulting from new sources and ambient noise shall not exceed the standards established in Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code.

Action 2.1: Amend Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code to specify where noise impacts should be measured, and to define how noise levels shall be measured. This definition should consider the effect of topographic features, ground impedance, atmospheric conditions, and other variables associated with sound and vibration transmission.

Policy 3: Noise and vibration from blasting activity shall be minimized to the extent feasible by observing prudent and accepted blasting procedures.

Action 3.1: Amend Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code to include standards for the amplitude of air blasts and ground-borne vibration.

Action 3.2: Future development projects with the potential to adversely impact the environment due to noise and vibration from blasting activity shall provide an analysis of the impacts prior to project approval. The analysis shall:

- a) be the responsibility of the applicant;
- b) be prepared by a qualified person under the direction of Mono County;
- c) assess the noise environment in the general project vicinity;
- d) demonstrate that the amplitude of air blasts and ground-borne vibrations shall be within acceptable limits as defined in Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code. The analysis shall take into consideration site specific conditions such as the impact on adjoining land uses (including significant wildlife habitat), ground impedance, atmospheric conditions, timing and scheduling of blasting, appropriate notice requirements, and other variables associated with sound and vibration transmission; and
- e) recommend noise control measures to avoid or mitigate noise impacts to a level of non-significance (unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process) and to assure compliance with Chapter 10.16 of the Mono County Code; and

Noise control measures shall be included in the project plans and specifications and shall be made a condition of approval for the project.

**OBJECTIVE C**

Avoid the juxtaposition of potentially noise incompatible land uses.

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Policy 1: Identify existing and potential noise sensitive areas and land uses.

Action 1.1: Designate identified noise sensitive areas and uses to protect those areas from noise impacts.

Action 1.2: Identify and mitigate cumulative noise impacts resulting from development.

Policy 2: Avoid the development of noise sensitive land uses, such as schools, hospitals, and residential development, adjacent to noise generating land uses, such as airports, heavy industrial areas, mines, and geothermal plants.

Action 2.1: Implement Airport Land Use Plans.

Action 2.2: Implement Area Plans.

Action 2.3: Implement the Land Use Element.

Policy 3: Avoid the development of significant noise generating land uses adjacent to noise sensitive land uses such as schools, hospitals, residential and wilderness areas.

Action 3.1: Implement Airport Land Use Plans.

Action 3.2: Locate noise intensive uses on the periphery of community areas.

Action 3.3: Require sufficient buffers between noise intensive uses and noise sensitive uses.